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ABSTRACT

Inhibitors of growth in education and training in South Africa include the past isolation from the rest of the world, failure to keep up with the rapid development of explosion of knowledge, compulsory dependency on bureaucracy, and disregard of the diverse needs of learners. Various initiatives have been undertaken that reflect the enormous need for growth in South Africa. Areas of provision that need urgent attention are adult basic education, alternative access to tertiary education, incomplete secondary education, vocational education, skills improvement, and retraining. The winning recipe for growth is a combination of distance education with a difference and technology for the masses. Distance education must combine and modify the best features of different models to suit South Africa's unique needs: its vast number of learners and the lack of technology. To overcome the drawbacks of lack of electricity and educational aids at learners' homes, the recommended model uses community learning centers. Three possible approaches are the television model for self-study, the study center model, and the dual mode model. Relevant and appropriate local support could be provided through community learning centers. All approaches would involve partnerships among at least three parties: appropriate study materials, the provider of telecommunications, and the dormant partner, the sponsor. (YLB)

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FROM DORMANCY TO GROWTH

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A PAPER BY

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Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a pleasure and a great honour to represent not only my college, but also my country - South Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

The situation in South Africa is not unknown to you - we have been in the limelight for a considerable time regarding all kinds of issues like politics, health, education and others. Thank you, therefore, for giving me the opportunity to focus at this important conference on vocational education and training in South Africa.

At this point please accept my apologies for my co-speaker who could unfortunately not meet his appointment as indicated on the programme.

I have not come to break the news of a grand new breakthrough in education, nor to share any great innovative idea. I simply came to use the opportunity to "focus on South Africa", to share with you what is going on in our country, to share with you how non-formal education by non-governmental or[illegible]izations is joining hands with formal vocational education as offered by my college, Technisa, to take you on what we at my institution see as the road from **"Dormancy to Growth"**.

There is no doubt we have a situation in South Africa which calls for in-depth thinking and planning.

We are fully aware of the vast changes that are needed, and have already started. South Africa is a country with a total population of about 30 million people who are over 13 years of age, about 9 million of whom (that is, 30%) are functionally illiterate. At a regional level illiteracy and innumeracy vary from less than 20% to over 40%. Almost 52% of potentially employable young people of all races between 16 and 30 are unemployed. In total about 12 million people are out of school and out of work. These figures reflect the impact of social, economic and educational policies under apartheid:

- many black South Africans simply could not access anything beyond the most basic education;
- when they did attend schools and other educational institutions, they received inferior education and training;
- many of them rejected formal education and training as part of an oppressive and foreign regime.

For these and other reasons, an estimated 66 % of young Africans have discontinued their studies. Some 20% of African students leave matriculation without writing the final exam. In 1992 and

1993, 400 000 failed matriculation. In 1993 only 10% obtained school leaving results which allow them entry into higher education. Tertiary education absorbs only about 120 000 per annum. These statistics were retrieved from a report of investigations into community education in South Africa, the NICE (National Investigation into Community Education) document published late in 1994.

2. DORMANCY IN EDUCATION

Apart from the effects of apartheid, why is there this vast lagging behind in education? What are the inhibiting factors?

- One of the stronger inhibiting factors could possibly be the past isolation of South Africa from the rest of the world. Education suffered in the sense that we didn't grow with the technological development in the rest of the world.

- Having to keep up with the rapid development and explosion of knowledge is another inhibiting factor, although this is certainly not restricted to South Africa.

- The compulsory dependency on bureaucratic systems resulted in:
  - poor assessment systems that relied almost entirely on end of year and end of semester examinations;
  - poorly provided learner support;
  - an institution and teacher centred approach rather than one that focused on the learner;
  - extremely slow processes for changing curricula;
  - lack of strategies for taking advantage of distance education in vocational education.

- Education and training did not grow sufficiently and was further inhibited by the disregard of the diverse needs of learners, for example, those of a white middle class male compared with those of a black woman living in a rural community.

- In general the role, the place and the funding of distance education were not recognised and were hampered by legislation and bureaucratic regulations.

The above mentioned factors are only some of the inhibitors of growth in the education and training scene - many more could be identified. The message really is: there was inhibition and neglect of education, and this called for change.

3. CHANGE

"Change" is the buzz word in South Africa. We changed our government, we are changing our outlook and mindset, our structures and society.

We have had our first free elections. But now people want to see how this will change their lives for the better.

What concerns us is that people are also waiting to see the change in education. People are still in the mode of change - the results need to be conspicuous. Change could be detrimental, but with a strong vision and carefully handled, could lead to growth.

4. THE WAY AHEAD

It is my firm conviction that, due to strong and enlightened leaders, we have a clear vision to follow. Because of our particular interest in vocational education I would like to focus on initiatives towards growth in this field. These include:

- the White Paper on Education and Training;
- the Act on Education;
- delegation of powers to the provincial structures;
- the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development;
- a proposal paper on integration of education within provinces;
- various position papers on the roles of Technical Colleges in the new dispensation;
- various papers on the National Qualifications Framework and the function of the South African Qualifications Authority.

Key features of all of these are:

- the meeting of key social, educational and economic goals identified in the South African Government's broad policies and strategies for transforming South Africa, as expressed in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP);
- the integration of education and training;
- the redress of past injustices and disadvantage;

- learner centred and client centred education and training;
- flexible provision of education and training;
- improved learner support systems;
- portability of credits and mobility of learners within a national qualifications framework that establishes and guarantees standards of learning outcomes at all levels and in all sectors of education and training.
- the need to transform, not only existing institutions and systems, but the whole approach taken to education and training, if we are to address the points that I have listed above. **I would argue that quality distance education strategies and resources can play a major role in such a transformation**.

5. THE NEED FOR GROWTH

The various initiatives I have described reflect, amongst other things, the enormous need for growth in South Africa. Internally the country needs to create jobs, increase the supply of housing, increase and improve health facilities, and increase the provision of food. In addition to these basic needs, it wants to maintain and improve its involvement in social, cultural and sporting activities. At a broader level, South Africa must not only take its place in the international community politically, but it must compete in a complex, volatile and tough international economy.

Fundamental to all these needs lies education and training.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The following areas of provision need urgent attention:

- adult basic education, in particular literacy;
- alternative access to tertiary education;
- incomplete secondary education;
- vocational education;
- skills improvement;
- re-training.

It is my firm belief that technical colleges need to expand to cope with the demand and that they will need to use distance education strategies in this process.

7. THE SOUTH AFRICAN ISSUE

The issue for education in South Africa is in the numbers - how does one take 0.1% high level first world education to the remaining 99.9% of the population?

Several initiatives, some of which have already been mentioned, have sprung up. Although we are fully aware of the vastness of the issue, we also believe that we have a winning recipe for growth.

8. WINNING RECIPE FOR GROWTH

Colleagues, we believe that to be able to make a contribution towards growth, we need mass, unfiltered, non-discriminatory and simultaneous intervention by means of:

- distance education with a difference.
- technology for the masses.

9. DISTANCE EDUCATION WITH A DIFFERENCE?

We believe that an answer lies within the distance education delivery mode. However, it needs to be distance education with a difference - the distance needs to be taken out of distance education. Models such as the open universities and open colleges around the world, models that make provision for the development of excellent study material and learner support, have been scrutinized. Whilst these models have much to offer us in South Africa, their best features need to be combined and modified to suit our country's unique needs, in particular:

- our vast numbers of learners;
- the lack of technology

10. TECHNOLOGY FOR THE MASSES - A SOUTH AFRICAN APPROACH

10.1 General

To overcome the drawback caused by lack of electricity and consequently educational aids at homes of learners, we believe that there is a model that could offer the solution, namely the model of Community Learning Centres that are:

- based in the community;
- equipped with the necessary technological support;
- supported by high quality study materials;
- supported by providers of appropriate telecommunications services.

10.2 Possible Approaches

10.2.1 Model 1: The television model for self study

In this model learning is delivered by means of television. Quality programmes, telecommunications services and local support (for example, from local technical colleges) are basic to this approach.

Materials developed to the necessary standards would be broadcast by television for use by any technical college. They could also be taped onto video cassette for re-use by learners.

It is recognised that one way broadcast television has limitations as a medium of instruction and that this approach would require considerable additional support through the provision of supplementary learning materials (for example, in print), local educational facilitators and learner self help groups. These could be provided by local technical colleges as part of their general programmes, or they could be provided through specially established study centres in the colleges or elsewhere in the community. The provision of this support underpins the two alternative approaches that I will now describe.

10.2.2 Model 2: The study centre model

Distance learning centres are set up at the local technical colleges, or closer to the community, where distance education learners can get the necessary support from facilitators and where they can have the added benefit of team study groups to deal with television broadcasts received at these centres.

The centre needs to be a fully equipped centre where video recordings of broadcast lessons are available in a media centre to allow learners a large amount of self-study.

10.2.3 Model 3: The dual mode model

Large numbers of learners attend television or video classes in technical colleges where facilitators assist them. They will also have access to study centres for support like other distance education learners.

10.3 Technology

While these simplified models may seem appropriate, it cannot be utilized without modern technology. Until now, modern technology could not be used due to the fact that large numbers of learners do not have access to either equipment or electricity.

Distance education cannot, however, successfully grow and expand without the use of technology. Several initiatives in technology have sprung up, one of which is Africa Growth Network (AGN). The AGN is a private commercial provider of training services that make use of telecommunications networks, based initially on the need to provide in-service training to bank staff.

10.4 Community Learning Centres

Fundamental to any of the approaches I have proposed is relevant and appropriate local support. These would best be provided through Community Learning Centres that would:

- be established within reach of the learners in a particular community.
- be equipped with the necessary technology to enable delivery of study material to learners.
- be equipped with the necessary technology to ensure learning opportunities and support for the learners;
- provide access to learner friendly technology;
- be the responsibility of the community for the community;
- be based on the provision of a mentor.

10.5 Partners

10.5.1 General

All approaches that I have described would involve partnerships between at least three parties, as described in the sections that follow.

10.5.2 The first partner

The first partner will develop appropriate study materials. In the case of vocational education this would be Technisa, the Technical College of South Africa for Distance Education. Technisa is the only technical college of its kind, and carries enormous responsibility for the provision of technical and vocational distance education, at both provincial and national level.

Technisa is ideally suited as an instrument for government to reach the masses that need education and training, provided that the other technical colleges are drawn into the model and that technology can be utilized. In this capacity, Technisa would be responsible for the development of high quality study materials that are:

- learner friendly;
- appropriate to needs of commerce and industry;
- supported by different media;
- outcomes based and modular;
- adaptable;
- within the reach of the masses. This implies the alternative delivery methods and much larger classes which I described earlier.

10.5.3 The second partner

The second partner is the provider of telecommunications. There is a number of possible organisations that could provide these services, and it would probably be the case that a number of different partnerships would be formed depending on the particular needs and circumstances of specific initiatives, programmes and projects. One possible partner is the Africa Growth Network to which I have already referred. AGN has a stated policy of putting technology within the reach of the people. They also deliver material in certain

fields of study. AGN is negotiating with technical colleges to operate as agents and delivery points in an effort to bring education closer to the community.

During my recent visit to Canada, more interest in technology was shown. Our recipe for growth seemed to be acceptable and captured the interest of colleagues from other parts of the world. I have at this stage two promises of assistance in the field of technology.

10.5.4 The third partner

We still need to find the third partner in this tripartite model - the partner without whom we cannot grow and cannot take the distance out of distance education, without whom we cannot supply technology to the masses, the still dormant partner, the sponsor, without whom the process is not complete, without whom we cannot go from dormancy to growth!

We hope to find this partner very soon to set us on the way from "Dormancy to Growth" to enable us to make our contribution in making South Africa the winning nation we are destined to be!

I thank you for your attention.